

Application No. 09/762,560
Response to Final Office Action

Customer No. 01933

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

The Examiner's indication of the allowability of the subject matter of claims 36, 38, 40, 41, 43-45, 48, 49, 53 and 58 is respectfully acknowledged.

These claims, however, have not been rewritten in independent form at this time since, as set forth in detail hereinbelow, it is respectfully submitted that their respective parent claims, as amended, also recite allowable subject matter.

THE CLAIMS

Independent claims 32, 42, 57 and 61-64 have been amended to clarify the feature of the present invention whereby the image information is distributed to at least one of the plurality of printers in accordance with a predetermined sequence, wherein if the image (or print) information comprises image information to be printed on a plurality of sheets, a plurality of the printers are assigned to print respective ones of the sheets in accordance with the predetermined sequence, as supported by the disclosure in the specification at, for example, page 21, line 16 to page 25, line 29.

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No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully submitted that the amendments to the claims are clarifying in nature only. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the amendments to the claims be approved and entered under 37 CFR 1.116.

THE PRIOR ART REJECTION

Claims 32-35, 39, 42, 46, 47, 50-52, 54, 57, 59 and 61-64 were rejected under 35 USC 102 as being anticipated by USP 6,655,284 (previously cited "Hoshii et al"). These rejections, however, are respectfully traversed.

According to the present invention as recited in each of amended independent claims 32, 42, 57 and 61-64, image information is distributed to at least one of the plurality of printers in accordance with a predetermined sequence, wherein if the image (or print) information comprises image information to be printed on a plurality of sheets, a plurality of the printers are assigned to print respective ones of the sheets in accordance with the predetermined sequence.

With this structure, image (or print) information is printed by a plurality of printers, and the data to be printed is efficiently distributed to enable photo printing to be processed rapidly.

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The Examiner argues on page 4 of the Office Action that Hoshii et al discloses distributing print jobs in accordance with a "predetermined standard" (as formerly recited in the independent claims) because according to the Examiner Hoshii et al discloses allowing an advertiser to distribute print jobs.

It is respectfully pointed out, however, that the "distribution" of Hoshii et al is merely the transmission of information from a server over the Internet to a customer terminal apparatus. That is, according to Hoshii et al (see, for example, the abstract of Hoshii et al), and as recognized by the Examiner, an advertiser may send advertising information to be printed at image print apparatuses from a server to the print apparatuses.

By contrast, according to the present invention as more clearly recited in the clarified amended independent claims, the "distribution" is for job assignment among a plurality of printers of one single photographic print vending apparatus so as to efficiently distribute print data among those printers so that large numbers of print jobs can be processed in a short time at a high speed.

And it is respectfully submitted that Hoshii et al does not disclose, teach or suggest distributing image (or print) information to at least one of a plurality of printers (of the same photographic print vending apparatus) in accordance with a

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predetermined sequence, wherein if the image information comprises image information to be printed on a plurality of sheets, a plurality of the printers are assigned to print respective ones of the sheets in accordance with the predetermined sequence, as recited in clarified amended independent claims 32, 42, 57 and 61-64.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that amended independent claims 32, 42, 57 and 61-64, as well as each of claims 33-36, 38-41, 43-54, 58 and 59 respectively depending therefrom, all clearly patentably distinguish over Hoshii et al under 35 USC 102.

In addition, it is again respectfully pointed out that Hoshii et al is not a proper reference against the present application for the purposes of 35 USC 103, since Hoshii et al was commonly owned with the present invention at the time the present invention as made, and since Hoshii et al is only qualifies a reference against the present application under 35 USC 102(e). (See 35 USC 103(c).)

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In view of the foregoing, entry of this Amendment, allowance of the claims and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

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If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,

/Douglas Holtz/

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